

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

NIC-01 /059 W

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R 121519Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8049

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MUNICH

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3308

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, PO

SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESS REACTION TO PORTUGUESE COUP ATTEMPT

1. SUMMARY: FIRST SOVIET PUBLIC REACTION TO ABORTIVE  
PORTUGUESE COUP ATTEMPT (MARCH 12) FULLY BACKS OFFICIAL  
PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT CHARGES THAT IT WAS WORK OF "RIGHTIST  
ELEMENTS." TONE AND SUBSTANCE OF PRESS REPORTS WELCOME  
OUTCOME OF EVENTS. SOVIETS UNDOUBTEDLY PLEASED RE TUESDAY'S  
DEVELOPMENTS BECAUSE THEY POTENTIALLY SHIFT PERCEIVED THREAT  
TO PORTUGUESE DEMOCRACY AWAY FROM RECENT EXCLUSIVE FOCUS ON  
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LEFTIST VIOLENCE AND POTENTIALLY STRENGTHEN HAND OF LEFTISTS

IN ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. UNDER HEADLINE "ATTEMPT AT ARMED COUP BY REACTION CRUSHED" PRAVDA (MARCH 12) CARRIES THREE TASS STORIES FROM LISBON REPORTING ATTEMPTED COUP IN PORTUGAL. LEAD ARTICLE BY TASS CORRESPONDENT KOVALEV ATTRIBUTES ACTION AGAINST THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT TO "RIGHTIST ELEMENTS" AND REPLAYS PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES' ASSURANCES THAT THE SITUATION HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL. TASS QUOTES GONCALVES' CHARGE THAT THE "INCIDENTS" WERE THE WORK OF "REACTIONARY MILITARY ELEMENTS." REPORTING PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST REACTION, KOVALEV CITES JOINT COMMUNIST-INTERSINDICAL CALL FOR POPULATION TO COME OUT IN DEFENSE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND REPORTS PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY IS TAKING ALL NECESSARY MEASURE TO MOBILIZE THE POPULATION TO REBUFF THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE RIGHTISTS.

3. SECOND TASS ITEM SUMMARIZES PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES' STATEMENT CHARGING THAT "CERTAIN OFFICERS" USED FALSE AND PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS TO SUBVERT FORCES INVOLVED IN TUESDAY'S "COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ADVENTURE." GOMES IS ALSO CITED AS WARNING POPULATION AGAINST THE "MANEUVERS OF AGENTS-PROVACATEURS" SEEKING TO PROVOKE AN INTERNECINE STRUGGLE "WHICH CAN SERVE ONLY THE PLANS OF REACTIONARY FORCES" SEEKING TO LIQUIDATE PORTUGUESE DEMOCRACY. FINAL TASS REPORT ANNOUNCES ARREST OF COMMANDER AT AIRBASE WHERE COUP ATTEMPT ORIGINATED AND FLIGHT OF GENERALS DE SPINOLA AND DE MELO.

4. COMMENT: WE THINK THE SOVIETS WILL BE DELIGHTED BY YESTERDAY'S TURN OF EVENTS. PRESS HAS RECENTLY HINTED THAT SOVIETS WERE GROWING CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF LEFTIST VIOLENCE ON PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST AND LEFTIST FORTUNES IN NEXT MONTH'S ELECTIONS (E.G.N PRAVDA MARCH 11 ARTICLE ON CUNHAL'S CALL FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION TO STABILIZE THE POLITICAL SITUATION). ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT FROM THE RIGHT, HOWEVER, WILL PROBABLY BE SEEN HERE AS A WINDFALL BECAUSE IT RESTORES CREDIBILITY OF RIGHTIST THREATS TO PORTUGAL'S REVOLUTION AND SHIFTS ATTENTION AWAY FROM  
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RECENT LEFTIST VIOLENCE. SOVIETS, WE THINK, WILL ALSO WELCOME THE COUP'S POTENTIAL FOR STRENGTHENING THE HAND OF LEFTISTS IN THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT AND FOR REVIVING THE IMAGE OF THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS AS A SOURCE OF "MODERATE" SUPPORT OF THE "LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT."  
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